

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4213

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MARR, IS, LE

SUBJ: ME STAFF GROUP: SOUTH LEBANON AND GOOD FENCE

REF: BEIRUT 1651

1. DICK PARKER WAS RIGHT ON THE MARK IN POINTING OUT
TO BOUTROS THAT KEEPING THE GOOD FENCE OPEN IS A KEY
ISRAELI OBJECTIVE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. HOWEVER, IT
IS NOT CLEAR TO US WHAT BOUTROS MEANT IN THE FIRST TWO SENTENCES
OF PARA 10 OF REFTEL. IS HE SAYING THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY
WILL NOT ENTER INTO ALL AREAS OF SOUTH LEBANON? IF HE IS SAYING
IT WILL NOT ENTER ALL AREAS DOES HE MEAN IT WOULD DELIBERATELY
AVOID AREAS WHERE THE GOOD FENCE OPENINGS EXIST? PRESUMABLY,
IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND IS THE ARGUMENT THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD
FORCE HIM TO CLOSE THE FENCE IN ANY AREAS UNDER LEBANESE

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CONTROL. IS THIS NOT AS MUCH A DEROGATION OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AS ANY OTHER? IN TRUTH, LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY HAS BEEN VIOLATED SO MANY TIMES AND BY SO MANY PARTIES IN THE PAST FEW YEARS THAT IT WOULD BE A SPECIOUS ARGUMENT TO SUGGEST THAT THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY RESTS ON A CLOSING OF THE GOOD FENCE.

2. FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, I FEEL THE DISADVANTAGES IN THE USG'S TAKING A POSITION AGAINST THE GOOD FENCE FAR OUT-WEIGHS THE ADVANTAGES. FOR STARTERS, WE CANNOT ASK THE ISRAELIS TO EXERT CONTROL AND INFLUENCE ON HADDAD AND SHIDIAC AND THEN COME OUT AGAINST THE GOOD FENCE. IN ADDITION, THE ISRAELIS WOULD INTERPRET OUR TAKING A POSITION AGAINST THE GOOD FENCE AS OPPOSITION TO THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON. SINCE THE ISRAELIS ARE UNLIKELY TO CUT THIS TIME, WE WILL ONLY BE SETTING OURSELVES UP FOR ANOTHER UNRESOLVABLE ARGUMENT WITH THE GOI.

3. FINALLY, EVEN FROM A GOL PERSPECTIVE, IT MAKES LITTLE SENSE FOR KHOURY'S BRIGADE TO MOVE SOUTH OF THE LITANI ONLY TO HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON BY CLOSING THE GOOD FENCE. ALSO, WHY CREATE A SITUATION WHICH COULD PRECIPITATE DISINTEGRATION OR DEFECTIONS FROM THE "NEW" LEBANESE ARMY? KHOURY IS GOING INTO A DICEY SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AND WILL NEED ALL THE COOPERATION HE CAN GET FROM THE PEOPLE ON THE SPOT.

4. NOTWITHSTANDING THE NEED FOR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS POSED IN PARA ONE, I QUESTION WHETHER CLOSING THE GOOD FENCE IS EITHER NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE. RATHER, I THINK THIS WOULD TAKE US BACK SEVERAL STEPS. VIEWED FROM THE BROAD PERSPECTIVE, WE DO FAVOR OPEN BORDERS IN THIS REGION. WE SIMPLY CANNOT TELL THE GOI WE ARE WORKING FOR A MIDDLE EAST WHERE NEIGHBORING
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STATES LIVE IN PEACE AND COOPERATION AND THEN PROPOSE CLOSING ISRAEL'S DOOR WITH LEBANON. JUST AS JORDAN WITH THE OPEN BRIDGES, LEBANON AND ISRAEL HAVE BOTH BENEFITTED FROM THE OPEN FENCE: A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EXCHANGE OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS HAS TAKEN PLACE, ISRAELIS AND LEBANESE HAVE GAINED SOME ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES, AND LEBANESE CITIZENS HAVE RECEIVED MEDICAL TREATMENT NOT OTHERWISE AVAILABLE. IN SUM, A DEGREE OF NORMALIZATION HAS TAKEN PLACE. ALTHOUGH IT IS TRAGIC THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT IS THE RESULT OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR, WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THAT NORMALIZATION IS ONE OF OUR REAL OBJECTIVES IN THIS REGION.

LEWIS

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